CHINESE SHADOWS

by

Juliet Bredon.

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To Josephine Pond
with love from the
Author
Juliet Bredon & Laura.

Peking
March 1931.

CHINESE SHADOWS

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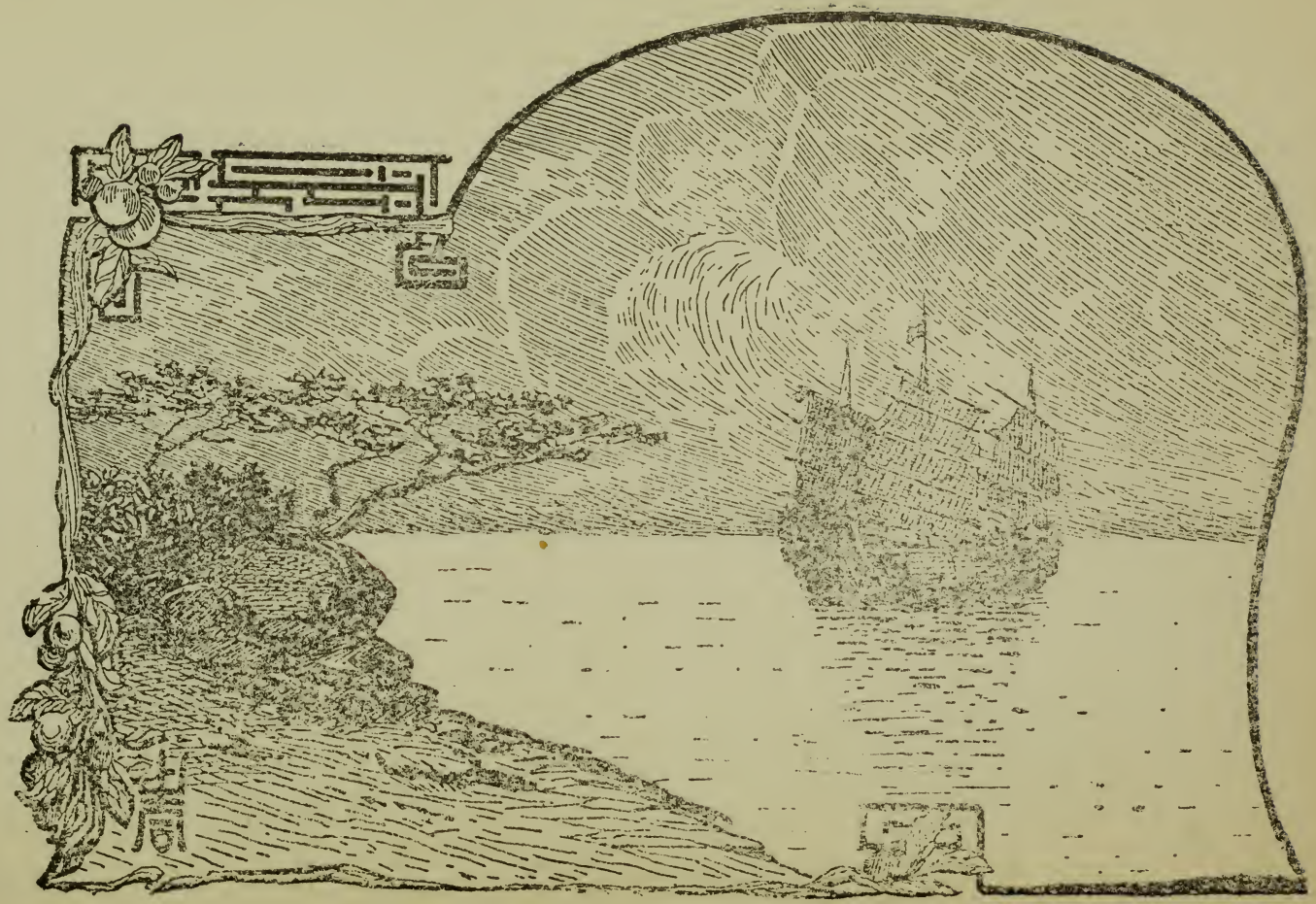
Juliet Bredon.

Printed by
the Pei Kuan Press
„Vostochnoe Prosveschenie Co"
Pei Kuan, Peking.
1922

Child songs.



The Dream Junk.

The Dream Junk.

(A Chinese Lullaby).

Sleep, my almond blossom, sleep,
The Lord of Heaven sends His command
That all the world shall close its eyes
And lie at peace beneath His hand.

Sleep, my treasure, sleep, nor fear
The Dragon who pursues the Sun,
For he must swallow up the light
Before the shadows can be born.

Sleep, wood pigeon, sleep, for now
The little golden fire-flies come
Out of the whispering bamboo-groves
To light the troops of fairies home.

Sleep, my heart, and rest thee well,
The Dream Junk sails the silver sea,
Hasten to reach the Port of Sleep
Where wait her precious freights for thee.

Dreamland.

How many *li* to dreamland?
Every baby knows.
The road leads straight through mother's arms,
You follow it safe from all alarms,
She holds you warm and close.

What does one see in dreamland?
Every baby knows.
The things she promised as you crept
On to her lap before you slept—
All the delights you chose.

What does one do in dreamland?
Laugh and sing and play;
Never a soul says "don't" to you,
There is'nt a thing you must'nt do
The happy, livelong day.

Chinese Cradle Song.

The little stars in the Bamboo Grove*
Are all set up so high,
That little hands can never reach
To pull them from the sky.
But you shall ride on a magpie's wing,
And travel up to see
If they are really precious gems
Worth bringing back to me.

*) The Bamboo Grove is the Chinese name for the Milky Way.

To a Belovéd Child.

Wherever you may wander down life's pathway,
Around your head may all the sunbeams play,
The flowers must be good to you,
And bow down as they should to you,
As forth you start upon your pleasant way.
The brooklets in the woods for you
Make music, gentle music, all the day—
Wherever you may wander down life's pathway.

Whenever you shall seek your rest, my dearie,
And folded in Night's tender arms lie down,
The little stars be good to you,
The moon smile as she should to you,
And set on your dear head a golden crown.
The wind shall croon a song for you,
And waft you rosy dreams like thistle-down—
Whenever you shall seek your rest, my dearie.

Bamboos.

The bamboos bend their feathery heads
Above the velvet moss,
Their pointed leaves are never still,
The breezes sway them at their will,
They shiver and quiver and toss.
The bamboos seem like restless men
Lacking in dignity,
They fidget with their small affairs,
They fuss and fume at petty cares,
And flurry and worry and flee.

Peonies.

Like painted ladies at the play
The peonies come out to-day,
Sitting so regal in their box
Of carven rocks.

Their petals wave like scented fans,
Their buds, like rosy-tinted hands,
Shine with pale jewels, bright and new,
Of morning dew.

Their gorgeous robes are all unpinned,
And blow out lightly in the wind,
They curtsey gracefully and sway
Like painted ladies at the play,
The peonies to-day.

Chrysanthemums.

Like envoys from a tributary king
In trailing robes of gold and amethyst,
Chrysanthemums, with their proud heads held high,
Stand stiff against a wall of autumn sky—
November's welcome guests.

Pigeons.

Pigeons, wheeling in circles,
Flying high,
Sail with a wing to the sun,
And a wing that is touched by the shadow.....

Men, following Desire,
Climbing high,
Mount with a face to the light,
And a heart touched by dark disillusion.....

Pigeons,
Seeking whence the winds come from,
Follow them unresisting....

Men,
Finding where the winds blow to,
Buffet them, still insisting....

The Old Philosopher.

(Adapted from the Chinese).

I am like an old tea-pot,
Cracked and discoloured
From standing year after year on the shelf
of life.

Some day I shall slip from the hand of
Time, the Potter,
And break, like all vessels of mortal clay,
And friends will gather up the fragments...

Perhaps a little sorry
That the ugly old thing which nobody
wanted
Is gone at last.

But I wonder
How many of the neighbours
Will spend five coppers for mourning
clothes
To wear at my funeral?

Peking Skies.

Peking skies,
Blue as dear eyes!
Tinting the roofs of the grey old town,
Mirroring themselves in each poor man's gown,
Bidding the artist look up, look up,
And draw from their clear, hollow turquoise cup
Colour and light for the vase he is making—
Heaven's own azure is his for the taking.

A Spider's Web.

A spider's web of dainty opal gauze,
Glittering with dew,
Is just a spider's web and nothing more
To me or you.

But to knight errants, like the blue winged
fly,
Adventuring free,
It is a fairy palace that allures,
Most temptingly.

Evening in a Peach Orchard.

Through a soft haze of blushing trees
Whispers the breeze,
And murmuring, like a shallow stream,
Soothes to a dream.
In the flushed heavens the moon hangs high,
And petals fly
To sink where, in the meadow grass,
Deep shadows pass.
The Golden Orioles, settling slow,
Call sweet and low,
The toilers from the fields are come
A-weary home.
The blossoms breathe an incense cloud,
Their heads are bowed,
As Night's soft blessing, full and deep,
Lulls them to sleep.

Song of the Coffin Maker.

When you choose a winter coat,
When you pick a wife,
Waste no time about it
For they only last your life.

But when you buy a coffin
You need it strong and good,
So get the richest lacquer
And take the finest wood.

Spare no time in choosing,
And never heed the price,
Buy the best for your long rest,
You will not buy it twice.

Wanderer's Song.

The golden Sun is my lover,
The silver Moon is my friend,
The clouds are my boon companions
From dawn until daylight's end.
I would rather follow the eagle
Or the wild geese, flying free,
I would rather chum with the mountains,
Or hark to the roar of the sea,
Than listen to all the gossip
Man's cruel tongue recalls,
And smother the soul within me
In cities with prisoning walls.

The Chant of the Threshing Floor.

Flail in hand on the threshing floor
We beat the golden grain;
Kaoliang red and *kaoliang* black,
Millet like golden rain,
Thwack, thwack,
We beat till our wrists are sore.

Powdered dust from the threshing floor
In eyes that sting and pain,
Weary arm and aching back,
While the flails sing the old refrain,
Thwack, thwack,
And sweat streams from every pore.

Hard the toil of the threshing floor,
Yet why should we complain?
Plenteous food will never lack
Till the harvest comes again,
Thwack, thwack,
What can a man ask more?

A Pilgrim's Song.

O, little shining rivulet
Born in the rock-bound spring,
I bring you all my weariness—
A gift of wandering.

Thy fern-fringed lips rest tired feet,
Thy waters soothe my pain,
But must I follow thee, cool and sweet,
Down to the dusty plain?

Song of the Goatherd.

Men talk of liberty,
But I am free;
Desire riches,
I have countless wealth;
Struggle for power and place,
But I have space.

Before me the mountains,
Beside me the streams,
Sweet grass for my goats,
And the world for my dreams.

I always go wandering, wandering free,
None have oppressed or down-trodden me,
Why then all this talk about liberty?

Little Gold Fish.

Little gold fish, I envy you,
Happily swimming your long life through,
Gleaming and darting, quick and cool,
In your shadowy lotus pool.

Little gold fish, you never wear
A binding cap, to keep your hair
From getting wet, or a bathing suit;
You never hurt a dainty foot
Among the rocks, where free you play
At hide and seek the livelong day.

Little gold fish, I envy you,
No shower of rain can wet you through.
Naked, you little, happy thing,
Warm in winter and cool in spring!

Little Red Fire.

Little red fire, burn slow, burn slow,
You frighten me when you shoot up so,
Making one mouthful of *kaoliang* stalks
I gathered for you on my weary walks.

Little red fire, glow red, glow red,
To warm the *k'ang* for my winter bed.
Please eat as little as ever you can—
Fuel is so dear for a poor old man.

Little red fire, I beg your grace,
Stay in your own little cozy place.
Why dance to the roof like a scampering mouse?
Just heat the oven—and spare the house.

The Crops are Good.

The crops are good this year, thank God,
The *kaoliang* washes like a flood,
Wave after wave with golden spray,
Breaking across the fertile plain,
Up to the hills and back again.

The swallows dip into the tide,
The bees, like hardy seamen, ride
Boldly upon the rippling waves,
Or steer their careful course between
The slender masts of swelling green.

Make haste, make haste! shipwreck is near.
Another month and, tall and drear,
Gaunt skeletons of broken masts
Will bend beneath the autumn gales,
And gone will be the last leaf-sails.

A Farmer's Burial in the Fields.

Here in his fields where he toiled each day,
Now let us lay him tenderly away.
Earth draw thy coverlet over his face
For he is weary and would rest a space.

You fed and held him happy on your knee,
No other place could he sleep easily
Save on your quiet and familiar breast.
Draw up your coverlet and let him rest.

There is no need to weep for such as he,
His whole life long he loved the earth,
and she,
With tender arms, will wrap his body round,
And join him to her in the fertile ground.

The Peasant's Prayer.

Lord of the Heavens, I do not pray
A place too near thy glittering Throne,
Nor shining robes nor jewels, nay,
Nor any task too high for every day.

I am a simple peasant, grant to me
Good health and strength to till my fruitful fields;
Send me soft rains for their fertility,
And let me work in partnership with Thee.

Give me when once the toilsome day is done
A well-earned rest beside my cottage door,
And there, when dark and daylight merge in one,
To hold within my arms my precious son.

Grant me when this life ends, grant me I pray,
In my next birth the things I have to-day,
Without them Heaven would not be Heaven to me,
I am not fit for sainted extasy.

White Pines in a Temple Garden.

(Pai Chia T'an.)

White pines in a temple garden
Like ghostly giants stand,
Their heads held high in the moonlight,
Their feet struck deep in sand.

Wild winds in their top-most branches
Like ghostly wolf-packs wail,
As they follow from dark to dawning
The lure of a phantom trail.

Ginko Trees at Ta Chüe Ssu.
-November-

Loveliest of trees, the Ginko now
Is hung with gold on every bough,
Since every fern-like leaf that lingers
Is touched by autumn's Midas fingers.

Richest of trees, the Ginko sheds
Its lavish fortune on our heads,
And, like some spendthrift millionaire,
Invites us all its wealth to share.

Pa Ta Chu.

Picturesque temples slipping down the hills,
A foreign-style hotel, brand-new,
The flare
Of hissing lamps, the blare
Of motor horns,
Heralding tourists come to see the view.

Walk in, walk in, and gaze
On shrines of other days,
Now a pathetic show
For those who come and go
Their curious ways.

Brocaded curtains hiding dusty gods,
Push them aside. These cobweb screens
Worn thin
By passing time, begin
To fall apart,
And droop on bended knees from rusty
rods.

Walk in, walk in, my friend,
Your offering will mend
Torn roofs and broken walls,
Or help re-gild the halls
That crumble to their end.

Play the kind surgeon for an hour's space,
One of the passing crowd, then haste
To dine
On copious food, with wine
You lack at home—
Compared to this sight-seeing is a waste.

The Pool.

(At Hei Lung T'an.)

The limpid pool like a lute of jade,
With mossy wrappings of old brocade,
Lies drowsing in the chequered shade.
Still world and windless sky,
Shimmer of heat,
Peace, like a lullaby,
Spread at our feet.

Pi Yun Ssu.

Lift up, lift up your eyes unto the hills,
Where Pi Yun Ssu, a clouded marble gem,
Is set in the green valley's diadem!
Breathe in the incense the wild thyme
distills.

The shadows move, processional and slow,
Across the plain, with fingers on their lips,
To touch at last the noble tower's tips,
When they have blotted out the world below.

Hark! to the bells that like a flock of doves
Fly out upon the drowsy evening air,
While in his fields a peasant kneels at
prayer
Beside the crumbling tombs of those he
loves.

In a Deserted Temple Garden.

The grass grows long in the temple garden,
The Morning Glories climb where they please,
The Jasmine droops near the shady spring,
And the wind steals tip-toing through the trees.

Tinkling, sighing, softly singing,
Sweet as incense and sad as tears,
The bells on the eaves are always ringing
Down through the silence of the years.

Priests and pilgrims have left the garden,
Deaf to the music of bells and trees,
Some are careless and some are sleeping
Under brown earth-tents in quiet peace.

O, the song of the wind-bells swinging,
Sweeter and sadder far than tears!
O, the echoes of prayers still ringing
Down through the silence of the years!

Left alone in that dear old garden
A mossy god with his patient smile,
Lightly touched by the years in passing,
Lingers, waiting, this long, long while.

Hark, in the bells' soft voices falling,
Faint and far, can you seem to hear:
„Lord and Master" (the Faithful calling),
And: "*You* have forgotten. *I* am here".

The Sweeper of Shadows.

On All Soul's Day.

The soul comes back to its vacant dwelling,
The old, old home that it knew on earth,
To stand once more by the glowing hearth,
With a ghostly love for the past compelling.

The feast is spread and the candles burning,
The altar is fair with fruits and flowers,
And one beside it is counting the hours,
Her soft eyes filled with tenderest yearning.

Drawn by their force from a higher birth
By a strength of love even death repelling,
The soul comes back to its vacant dwelling
To seek the Beloved One still on earth.

The Emperor who Became a Monk.

(The Emperor Chien Wen, who fled in 1402 from Nanking before the conquering troops of his uncle Yung Loh to become a monk, lamented bitterly when an accident revealed his identity and he was obliged to leave his peaceful retreat).

O, call me not back to the throne again,
Robe me no more in the robes that press,
For peace is here on this cloud-topped hill,
And light indeed weighs the poor monk's dress.

Few are the pilgrims that attain
This deep retreat with its pious rest,
Life slips away like a running stream,
And I am only Time's passing guest.

The sound of the bells in the evening rain
Is sweeter than any wine-stained fête,
Wake me at dawn for the hour of prayer,
But never again for affairs of state.

Re - Birth.

Was I once a crag on some high peak's
crest,
With my grey head bared to the pitiless
sun,
Or my sharp comb serving for low clouds
rest?

Was I once the cone-heavy branch of a
pine,
Tossing sharp needles in turbulent storm,
Or scenting the air like a fragrant wine?

Was I once a glistening spider's thread,
Hung among grasses a-gleam with dew,
Or a painted lily with bended head?

No memory of past re-birth remains,
But I give and deliver myself to Life
To live my To-morrows as Law ordains.

Remembrance.

(At the Jade Fountain.)

Long ago and long ago,
You and I were here I know,
For these pleasure parks of kings
Seem to me remembered things.

This pagoda towering high
Like a flame into the sky,
Burning upwards towards the blue,
I have seen it—so have you.

All the ripples on the lake
Which the passing breezes wake,
All these silent patient trees
With the violets round their knees,
Stir up ghostly memories.

Silver moon barque, sailing slow,
Pines bent neath a weight of snow,
Often we have seen them so
Long ago and long ago.

Inscriptions.

Lines Carved on a Rock Overhanging a River.

The fields of Life are fair and wide,
The River of Hope runs close beside,
A-gleam in the morning light.
O, Traveller hasten and drink thy fill,
Lest further it run not beside thee still—
Beware of the thirsty night!

Lines Written on the Wall of a Pleasure Pavilion

Once we plucked Roses of Passion,
And, in youth's light-hearted fashion,
Laughed at their thorns and their stains.
Now their red petals are falling,
Idly their beauty recalling,
Ah! but their fragrance remains.

Lines carved on a Scholar's Ink-Slab.

The scholar's mind is like a thirsty sieve
For men to pour their foolish prattle through,
It catches what perchance is fit to live,
Re-moulds it nobly, sends it forth anew.

Contrast.

Things cast no shade
That stand not in the sun,
Man holds no friend
Who never made a foe,
Life gives no joy
Without its depths of woe,
We earn no rest save by our work—well
done.

Peking Palaces.

Halted, like a noble procession,
The palace halls—
Huge tents
Of Eastern opulence,
Whose roofs are golden mirrors,
Lamps that glance and flash;
Whose shadowy gates, immense,
Opened for bending crowds
Of servile courtiers,
Wearing rich, embroidered robes.—
Out of their noblest dreams kings wrought
these palaces,
Now empty, useless, they dream deep
In golden melancholy,
Radiant ghosts against the sun,
Filled with dead memories
Of high festivities,
Memories that drift, and pass, and pass,
Until the daylight fails,
And night and all the stars sweep over
them.

The Open Altar of Heaven:

There was wisdom in the Ancients
When they built this open altar.
Living worship, adoration,
Should be free to rise on high,
Unimpeded by a ceiling
That is lower than the sky.

God should never be imprisoned
In a temple of man's building.
Who are we to dare ensnare Him
In our crypts and vaults of stone?
Wise were those who set his Altar
In the sunshine all His own.

There was wisdom in the Ancients
When they kept the priests from coming
With their perfunctory praises
To the shining marble Throne,
When they sent one man to serve Him
The God-Emperor—alone.

When Western men honour their God,
Their great cathedrals rise
With spires and pointed pinnacles
That seek to pierce his skies.

But in the East, smooth temple roofs
Curved like soft lips, topped with gilt spheres,
Invite High Heaven to rest on them,
Reflect its sunshine, gently shed its tears.

Nirvana.

One little unforgotten, mortal day,
I shall slip off my body like a garment,
And soar away, quite light and free,
To enter Thee, O Everlasting Peace!
And thy deep Night, splashed by a thous-
and Suns,
Will drown my small desire
For earth and home and Self.

He played upon the *Hu-ch'in* and, at first,
it seemed
As if the music mocked at us and gleamed
Like ripples on a lake, or flashed like
birds,
Rose-breasted, dipping down in airy flight
To rise and soar again into the light.

He played upon the *Hu-ch'in* and, again,
it seemed
As if we grasped the visions that we
dreamed.
His cunning bow cast riches at our feet,
Poured in our laps treasures we could not
buy,
Rich silks, rare flowers and jewels, lavishly.

A true magician
This street musician,
Gathering the joys that we each hoped
to win,
And giving them out through his small
violin.

Butterflies.

Dainty little acrobats
Balancing on flowers,
Swaying on the light trapeze of vines that
curtsey to the breeze
Through the sunny hours.

Perching on the moving airs,
Standing still in space,
Dancing on the silver wire of spider webs
that sunbeams fire,
Or petals fine as lace.

Tiny dew-drops on your wings
Gleam like precious stones,
Diamond and ruby dust, green and silver,
gold and rust—
All the rainbow tones.

Tell me, fairy creatures,
Why you never fall
From the madly dancing leaves, or slide
from raindrops on the sheaves
Of grasses, mountains tall.

Are you really mortal,
Children of an hour?
Or are you, as the peasants say, just the
souls who come to stray
A moment in our bower.

A Lover's Seasons.

The breeze upon a summer's day,
How soft its fingers touch the trees!
The fragrant peonies a-swoon,
Drunk with the breath of radiant noon,
The golden summit of the year
And thou beside me, lady dear,
To lead me down the perfumed ways,
Can there be sweeter things than these?

The wind upon a winter's day
That groans and shivers, ill at ease!
The leafless shrubs with meek, bowed heads,
Packed tight within their frozen beds,
The dying year, stark and severe,
And thou far distant, lady dear,
Leaving me to my lonely way,
Can there be sadder things than these?

Impressions:

Peking—from the Western Hills

Far in the distance
The city lies mysterious,
Like an enchanted garden of stone flowers,
Strange, exotic blooms.
The White Dagoba, mirrored in the lakes,
Is a twin magnolia bud
That floats on the blue waters,
And in the bluer air.
Pink walls blush like lotuses
Touched by their Lord, the Sun.
Palaces are glowing tiger lillies,
And faded towers drop their tiles
Like tired petals.
O, it is thirsty for tending, this garden!

Tall pagodas shoot up like reeds
Ready, it seems, to bow before the wind;
Small shrines, like modest buttercups,
Dot level lawns of gray-green roofs,
And higher up, far higher, reaching smooth
hands

Towards the sky,
The Temple of the Happy Year
Rises like an a big Bluebell.
O, what a pity, is it not,
That factory chimneys will creep in
Like ugly weeds—to over-run the garden?

Manchurian Cranes.

I saw the wild cranes flying over the city—
Lifting the dawn with rosy feet,
Dripping the darkness from their wings,
Carrying the night upon their backs,
Wide plumes spread, fan-like, for the stars
To rest upon;
The stars that look like flecks of spray
From a golden wave.
The wild cranes fly slowly, steadily, under
the waning moon,
High above the immensity of gate towers,
Grace looking down on strength.
They swing southwards on their long, long
journey
Towards the goal they seek unresting.
And it seems to me
That the groaning city, anchored to earth
by stone,
Sighs for their freedom to traverse the airs.

The Great Wall.

Writhing and twisting,
Turning and doubling,
Climbing a peak
To leap into a valley,
Crouching in a valley
To spring upon a crag—
The Great Wall—a huge stone monster,
A dragon, petrified yet seemingly alive,
Born from the brain of Ch'in, the Only First,
In that dark age of time
When monstrous creatures were a common sight;
Its silver loops shine on the mountain tops,
Finding a foothold where the Argali slips;
Its towers stand like sentinels on naked rocks.
The eagle lights upon their shoulders
Resting without fear since, being stone, they move not.
Immovable the Great Wall stands and lets the years

Slip into centuries,
Immovable yet wandering
Across mountains and rivers, valleys and plains,
Skirting the deserts that the skies enfold
Like a blue tent;
Often crippled, often weary, yet ever faithful,
Guarding, with ceaseless vigilance,
The land of the Builder.
Wandering,
Wandering,
Wandering—uselessly.

The Birthday of Confucius.

The musicians are gathered together
To make harmony before him,
The Master of Ten Thousand Ages.
They play upon the serpent-bellied *San-hsien*,
And strike the sonorous stone *Tê-ch'ing*,
They draw reluctant notes from the shrieking *Ya-hsien*,
And strange sounds, like the hissing of silver snakes,
From clay flutes, while the drums purr like angry tigers.
High mount the immemorial hymns,
Streaming towards the heavens.
They are sent up in praise,
Sped on their way with ceremony,
Escorted by melodious words
And deep obeisance, like honoured guests,
Because in life he loved them and listened to them with pleasure.
Let them soothe his spirit, let them invite his spirit
Like an ear to lean over us, and hear the tale of our misfortunes,

As often it has listened,
In this same grey dawn,
To the mighty exploits of the Great Emperors,
And the splendid tale of our past glories.
Listen, O Master, listen we pray thee,
And from thy wisdom, advise us now!

He stands in a corner of the busy fair,
The crowd pressed close around him stares
and gapes—
A dull, blue-coated crowd of toilers
Freed from the work-bench for the festival.
His eyes, a moment, rest on those that look
Towards him somberly.
Then, suddenly,
He opens wide a door and leads them in
To a new world of fair romance.
He lights their lives, a heavy daily round,
With high adventure, shows them rebel
troops
Storming the high walls of the capital,
Leads them to sack the city.
See how the smoke spreads like black
plumes across the sky,
Hark to the bitter lamentations
Of women and old men who curse and die.
Alone, with artful gestures and consum-
mate skill,
He shows them war,
With all its horrors and its glorious deeds;

Jungles of death and tottering thrones.
His voice weaves a rich tapestry before
their eyes,
His voice commands the twisted pikes to
strike,
And bids the pennons float from fortress
gates,
And calls up stalwart bowmen, velvet clad.
The story teller—
Blowing blue smoke-wreaths from his tiny
pipe
Pauses a moment, patient, patronising,
Like a father who laughs secretly when
he plays with his children
While his young assistant collects the
coppers
That fall like a heavy rain around him.
Who would not pay a cent of two
To buy a dream
That can drown the dullness of everyday
life?

The Letter Writer.

An old letter writer sits in a sunny corner,
Beside the road near the Summer Palace.
He is very obliging and extremely patient
With humble customers, not always sure in their minds
What they desire to say to their distant relations.
But the letters he writes with the greatest pleasure
Are the messages mothers dictate to their sons—
Illiterate mothers who could not trace
A single character for themselves.
Sometimes he sighs as he writes decorous words,
That decently clothe the heart's loneliness,
And he says to himself:
"Is it not better to have a son
Who will worship at the ancestral tombs,
And perform the rites for his parents' souls,
Than to have the gift of turning phrases?
Why are these ignorant people so lucky?
What have I done that year after year
I must write their letters, when I myself
Have no one to whom I care to write'?'

The Blind Singer.

In an open tea-house
Overlooking the Canal,
Amid the shouts of the bargemen
And the bustle of passengers coming and
going,
A blind singer is singing
An old, old song.
His figure is bent like the branch of a
gnarled pine tree;
His face is ugly and pitted by small-pox;
But from his disfigured lips
There ripples a miracle of a voice,
Young and deep, unutterably touching.
He sings as the simple peasants sing,
With vocal rhythms learned from cicadae
And morning larks.
He weaves an air so golden thin
That its fragile tones break
Into fractions and semi-fractions
Of the tones we know.
All the sorrow and the sweetness and the
patience
Of life by the Canal flows into his voice—

The blind singer is singing.
Alas! that the people are busy unloading
their boats
And the moon is busy with her reflection
in the stagnant water

Which is unfit to mirror her.
But the stars smile their inscrutable twinkling
smile.
They smile on the singer and seem to
whisper:
"Neither have the people, so busy about
their affairs,
Neither have they time to listen to our
harmonies."

Incense.

(There exists in China a very rare and costly incense known as "Spirit-Recalling Incense" which has the power to summon the ghost of a dead person).

I lighted a stick of the magical incense
that summons the souls of the absent.
It is more precious than pearls and more
valuable than yellow jade.
I lighted it for Her, to bring my Beloved
back to me,
On the anniversary of our parting,
Because to-night my spirit ached with
intolerable loneliness.
She came—creeping towards me in the
perfumed smoke,
Swaying and bending in trailing robes,
exactly as in life,
With graceful gestures like young bamboos
in the wind.
A smile lay on the open lily of her face
Her arms were stretched out towards me,
Death could not hold her back.

Just for one moment, Time seemed to stand
still for us
While he marched on with the rest of the
world.
Just for one moment, I imagined that her
spirit re-incarnate
Would step forth between the dragon
handles of the brazier,
And, crossing the shadowy boundary, come
again to me.
Vain illusion!
The thrill of meeting is not meant to linger.
She fades away. . . . . .
The precious incense that could tempt her
back burns low.
Well, for a moment I have brushed the
world aside and walked among the stars
with her.
The price I paid? What does that matter?
It is not greater than the price of my own
life,
A useless thing—without Her.
All I had has gone to buy this pleasure
of a moment,

Leaving the rice bowl empty.
Better so. Now let my body waste away
And may my spirit, like a breath of smoke,
Go free to join her in the dreamless night.

Beggars.

Many are hungry,
Nothing I can give will feed them all.
Alas, that some must die for lack of food,
That others stronger, fitter may live out
their lives.
Now when I hear the starving, snivelling
wretches.
Following my cart and crying plaintively:
"Give, give, good sir, give, pitying elder
brother!
Give just one single, large, round, copper
piece"!
I wish that I could over-turn the sky
And use it as a massy hollow bowl
And load it to the brim with steaming rice,
Then cry aloud to all: "Eat, eat your fill"!
But since this gift is far beyond my power
Here, take my paltry coppers!

The Chinese City.

Encircling walls, like sheltering arms,
And faded towers;
Dust-heavy air prisoned in narrow lanes,
Bricks blurred with age;
Low houses crouching side by side,
Row after row, as like as peas
In one grey pod;
Temples hid modestly behind their walls,
With painted "spirit screens";
Pointed pagodas and peaked palace-roofs,
With grinning gargoyles that look down
When bitter winds come swaggering up the town,
And whirl and whip the leaves from every tree,
And drive the blinded people down the streets,
And start the gilded shop signs reeling. . . .
The Chinese city—a great, bustling, human thing,
Gripping our hearts, dazzling our eyes,
Haunting our ears with all its calls and cries;

The winds will beat you clean, will beat
you cold
And then the sun will come and paint you
gold,
Arm you with valiant light,
Till we can scarce believe you are so tired—
and old.

The Statue.

The Statue.

In olden times there lived an Emperor who came to his beautiful Favourite and said: "Behold, I love thee as no mortal man has ever before loved a woman. Never has there been such true love as mine for thee in all this changeful world".

And the Court Beauty believed him—because such was her nature.

But not content with his protestations, the King said further: "Behold, I give thee as a token this figure of pure and precious gold to be a symbol of my love—a figure of gold clothed in fine garments. Set it up in thy house for thy pleasure."

And she did as she was told, and all the other women in the Palace wondered and said: "How great must be the love of our Lord if he offers to the object of his devotion such a priceless gift!"

Now the King was proud of the pleasure of his Beloved. But one day, her first awe and wonder being gone, the Favourite touched with her hands the figure

and the wonderful garments to see of what manner of stuff her happiness was made—and she found the figure was gold indeed but the feet, which were hid by the trailing robes, were clay.

Then her eyes were opened and she craved audience with her Lord and said to him: "Why, O King, didst thou not tell me that the feet of thy love were of clay—the clay which men call Selfishness? If thou had'st done so might we not have hidden them together?"

But he answered:" I have believed them gold—and this belief was necessary to support my love". Then she answered him meekly: "O my Lord, I would so gladly have known them clay and, knowing, covered them!"

The Sweeper of Shadows.

The Sweeper of Shadows.

In the grey-walled capital, the old order changeth. Aeroplanes disturb tame pigeons sunning themselves on palace roofs. Passing motors drown the song of cicadae in sheltered gardens. Modern pavement is laid in the "Lane of a Thousand Fragrances" and the palace of the Great Lord Ku is filled with Republican clerks in fur-lined frock-coats, while sentries with fixed bayonets stand at its doors.

Ten years ago the dignity of the beautiful main gateway was guarded only by old Chang-ti, a picturesque figure, dry as a stik, wrinkled as crackled porcelain, beloved by every creature in that quiet, dusty street—men, women, naked babies, even the mangy dogs—for his kindly smile and gentle heart.

His father before him swept and garnished the courts of the house of Ku year in and year out—on long summer days when the air was drowsy with blossom-breathings and vibrant with the chirping of

innumerable crickets; likewise on winter days when the bitter lashes of the north wind stung and cut cruelly.

As soon as he was big enough to hold the broom, the boy began to learn the mysteries of his father's humble trade and when the old man entered upon the Way of Peace, he was able to carry on the work.

His was no light task, for the courts of the Great Lord were filled to over-flowing with Flowering Peach Trees and Pomegranate bushes, with *Hsien Kuei*, the sacred Cassia, and *Ching Hsing Ts'ao*, the Star Flower, in green earthenware pots ornamented with dragons, with beautiful willow-trees also whose long branches are like women's unbound hair. The lightest breeze scattered leaves or petals on the white stones.

These Chang-ti always hastened to sweep away. But there were darker patches which obstinately resisted all his efforts. They troubled him exceedingly because they marred the shining whiteness of the pave-

ment and he was perpetually warring against them.

The other servants, who liked him for his amiable ways and were always kind to him, explained that these dark spots were shadows. But though they patiently repeated the word again and again, he never understood, could never understand for, by some strange caprice of fate, his mind had not grown as his body grew. His mind had been born into a perpetual childhood. . . . . So thereafter he was allowed to persist in his harmless fancy and continue his sweeping undisturbed.

He was never really unhappy because he never realised the impossibility of the task he had set himself. He even had moments of pure happiness untroubled by desire which the other retainers of the household, with their perpetual bickerings and pinchings and screwings, secretly envied him. After a hard morning's work, for instance, when he had succeeded in sweeping

all the walks clean of shadows, a look of absolute contentment settled on his face.

Then he laid aside his bamboo broom and prepared to go off to the noon-day meal when some one called out the announcing phrase: "K'ai fan", "the rice is opened". Just before leaving he always took one last look over his shoulder to admire the spotless courtyards. Alas, while his back was turned new grimacing black shapes had gathered under the western wall. The smile would fade from his patient face then and, forgetting the steaming food that awaited him, he would go sorrowfully off once more trailing his broom behind him to disperse the intruders. It was hard to begin again just when he had nearly succeeded—so nearly.—It was doubly hard because everything seemed to conspire against him, even the clouds and the birds flying overhead and the big velvet-winged butterflies.

Yet he neither complained nor despaired. He only swept the harder. Sometimes

in the cool of the evening, when the lord of the household walked in the gardens, he would find the lad still toiling and, patting his cheek kindly, say: "Well, Small One, is thy work not done yet?" And the boy would always be obliged to answer shamefacedly: "Not yet, Master".

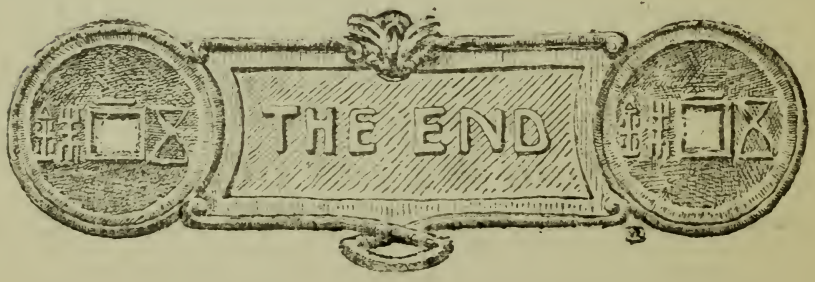
Thus he fought against the shadows year after year, the sun always before his broom and the moon behind it, till one winter the shadow of age touched Chang-ti himself as it had touched his father before him. His hands became too stiff for work. Another was given his place then in the garden and he was made keeper of the gate—an honorific charge allowing him to sit all day on a sunny bench with the other retainers who, having grown old in the service of the Great Lord Ku, were entitled to quiet idleness. But though they were too old to work any longer, these bowed and twisted servitors, they were still dreamers of dreams, still eager to discuss the things

that they desired. In each of them some longing was still alive.

"Ah," said one, "if I only had what I fancy, a beautiful *yamen* with blue tiles for a roof and carved dragons wriggling and snarling in gold underneath!"

A second craved dainty foods—shark's fins and soup made of the nests of birds, and a thousand other dainties which he had never tasted. And a third desired fur robes long and thick as the robes of the Master.

"And thou, old Chang-ti?" someone asked turning to him. The old man, called back from his reverie, sighed long and deeply. Then, after a pause, he said: "I—I wish only for strength to sweep my shadows as once I did".



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